

HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION 89
By DeBerry L

A RESOLUTION to honor and congratulate Mr. Rufus Thomas, Jr.
on the celebration of his eightieth birthday.

WHEREAS, it is fitting that the elected representatives of the state of Tennessee should recognize citizens who are celebrating milestones in their venerable lives; and

WHEREAS, Rufus Thomas, Jr. will celebrate his eightieth birthday on March 26, 1997, an occasion which will be commemorated with great joy in remembering the past, giving thanks for the present and eagerly anticipating the future; and

WHEREAS, self-described as the "world's oldest teenager", Rufus Thomas was born March 26, 1917 in Casey, Mississippi, and has lived in Memphis since he was one; and

WHEREAS, after graduating from Booker T. Washington High School in 1936, Rufus began traveling with the Rabbit Foot Minstrel Show as a tap dancer, comedian and scat singer; and

WHEREAS, four years later, Rufus returned to his beloved Memphis and married; he soon spread his musical roots by hosting the Amateur Show at the Palace Theater on Beale Street and starring as a disc jockey at WDIA Radio, while continuing to sing in Memphis clubs; and

WHEREAS, in 1953, Rufus released "Bear Cat" for Sun Records, and three years later teamed with his daughter, Carla, to cut "Cause I Love You" for Satellite Records, both songs becoming the first "hits" for the labels; and

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WHEREAS, Rufus Thomas released “The Dog” and “Walking the Dog” in 1963, two dance numbers that set the tone for his remarkable success. He later released “The Penguin”, “The Funky Chicken”, “The Breakdown” and “The Push and Pull”, among others; and

WHEREAS, Rufus has served as a world ambassador for the blues and his beloved state of Tennessee, and has even had a park in Italy named in his honor; and

WHEREAS, as host of a popular WDIA radio show, Rufus enjoys good health and continues to play his distinct brand of music; and

WHEREAS, the members of this body find it appropriate to pause in their deliberations to specially recognize one of Tennessee's finest citizens; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE ONE-HUNDREDTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE, THE SENATE CONCURRING, That we honor and congratulate Mr. Rufus Thomas, Jr. on the celebration of his eightieth birthday and extend to him our best wishes for much happiness in the years to come.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That an appropriate copy of this resolution be prepared for presentation to Rufus Thomas with this final clause omitted from such copy.